

● Language matters

On the right course

If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.' This saying by Nelson Mandela sounds true but one may forget about it when they are in a different city, state or country and face issues with speaking the local language.

This is what spurred Rekha Chandulal to start 'Courseloka', a startup in the city that offers spoken Kannada courses on a mobile app as well as desktop, in April this year.

A Bengalurean hailing from Delhi, Rekha learnt Kannada growing up in the city.

"With an influx of people into the Silicon Valley, I observed people facing the language barrier, just about managing and becoming disconnected locally. Having worked in another city, I had also faced various issues like these. So I decided to help integrate people locally by teaching them Kannada," says Rekha, an alumna of IIT Delhi and IIM Ahmedabad.

'Courseloka' has Kannada courses where they have speaking lessons without the script, with audio lessons to replay to get pronunciation right. The lessons have simple sentences and conversations for day-to-day talks. The lessons can be downloaded on the mobile app to refer and learn on-the-spot in real life situations and even while one is on the move.

"The topics much sought-after are making enquiries to seek help, giving courier or cab



HELPFUL Rekha Chandulal

directions, shopping, socialising, household matters, food, accommodation, health and emergencies. This sort of learning can help one save valuable time and effort through more efficient interactions," says Rekha.

So how has the response been so far? "Those from outside the city are responding positively to learning spoken Kannada easily on the mobile app. They have found learning the script difficult and miss classes due to traffic, night shifts and busy schedules.

Learning anytime, anywhere, at their own pace through the app has caught the fancy of the IT crowd. Audio lessons, images and interesting quizzes keep learners engaged," details Rekha. "Moving to a new city is fraught with many challenges. Communication can smoothen the process of integration to enjoy various things the city has to offer," feels Rekha. Corporates with multi-region employees can adopt 'Learn Kannada' for employee welfare, women safety and in order to build high performing teams which are not hassled by day to day life in the city. "This in turn will help them gain control, confidence and peace of mind and they will be able to move about the city freely and handle situations well," she says.

The app is also beneficial for foreign tourists many of whom find the idea of a reference app handy. As for their future plans, 'Courseloka' is looking at offering courses in all Indian languages as well as English and some foreign languages too.

Anushree Agarwal

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